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Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

George Edmund Haynes, 1880-1960



George Edmund Haynes was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1880. Haynes attended Fisk University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1903 and a Master of Arts Degree in 1904. While studying at the University of Chicago during the summer of 1906-1907, his naturally questioning mind became interested in the social problems of African Americans migrating from the south to the north and how they might be supported. This interest and an attempt to find the solution led him to study at the New York School of Philanthropy, from which he graduated in 1910.

Two years later George Edmund Haynes received the Doctoral Degree in Philosophy from Columbia University. The Columbia University Press would later publish his doctoral dissertation entitled "The Negro at Work in New York City." The National Association of Social Workers in its series Social Work Pioneers identified Haynes as a Social Worker, Educator, and proudly claimed him as the Co-Founder and the first Executive Director of the National Urban League.

Haynes would come to Fisk in 1910 to establish a Social Science Department and a Training Center for Social Workers. The Dept. of Social Science co-operated with the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, in conducting a settlement house in Nashville. Fisk Senior Sociology Students were required to give four hours of field work at the settlement house each week. These Fisk students ministered to an average of 350 families. Fisk had always emphasized community service, but its fame of training social workers began with George Edmund Haynes, who became an international

expert on racial affairs.

In March of 1916 a fire in East Nashville left over 2,500 people destitute. The aid for African Americans was made possible by the endeavors of Haynes and the Fisk Senior Class in cooperation with other black colleges. According to Dr. Haynes, the fire had laid the foundation in Nashville, Tennessee, for greater cooperation in meeting the problems of Public Welfare.

Soon after the fire, a conference of both races met to organize a Public Welfare League for Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Haynes was called to Washington, D.C. to head the newly created Division of Negro Economics in the Dept. of Labor. He was to advise the department on ways to improve working conditions for African Americans and methods for serving their entire corporation in the war production effort for World War I.

Dr. Haynes also became involved in the activities of the American Association for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee for the Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York, and the Committee on Urban Condition Among Negroes. He was instrumental in merging these groups into one organization named the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, which is known today as the National Urban League. He served as its Executive Director from 1911-1918.

He supervised field placements of League fellows at the New York School and was Professor of Economics and Sociology at Fisk University. On leave from Fisk from 1918-1921, he served as Director of Negro Economics in the United States

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Photo of Mr. Haynes provided courtesy of the "Columbia University and Slavery" project at Columbia University.

of Dept. of Labor. As a special assistant to the Secretary of Labor he was involved in matters of racial conflict in employment, housing, and recreation. He continued his earlier studies of exclusion of black workers from certain trade unions, interracial conditions in the workplace, and child labor. These studies resulted in numerous scholarly works. One of the most significant was 'The Negro at Work During the World War and During Reconstruction.' The work's wide spread and profound impact resulted in Haynes' appointment as a member of the President's Appointment Conference in 1921.

Earlier, while still a graduate student, he had been Secretary of the Colored Men's Department of the International Committee of the YMCA, during which time he visited black colleges and encouraged students to achieve scholastic excellence and to help black colleges set high academic standards. His work lead to the establishment of the Association of Negro Colleges and Secondary Schools, and Dr. Haynes served that organization as Secretary from 1910-1918. He also helped the New York School of Philanthropy in its collaborative planning that lead to the establishment of the first Social Work Training Center for black graduate students at Fisk, and he directed the center from 1910-1918.

In 1930 George Edmund Haynes did a survey of the work of the YMCA in South Africa, and in 1947 he conducted a similar study of the organizations activities in other African nations. These efforts resulted in his being chosen as Consultant on Africa by the World Committee of YMCA'S. His book, *Trend of the Races-* 1922, reflected his belief in the union of all people.

For the last nine years of his life, Dr. George Edmund Haynes taught at the City College of New York, and served as an officer of the American Committee on Africa. Dr. George Edmund Haynes died in New York City on January 8, 1960.

**-- Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
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Source:

Joe M. Richardson, *A History of Fisk University, 1865-1946*, University of Alabama Press, 1980.
